

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 ACDA-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 EB-03
H-01 L-01 NSC-06 NSCE-00 OES-02 OMB-01 PM-03
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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2961
INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 2859

LIMDIS

ATHENS FOR RTDO

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ENGR, SY
SUBJECT: ROYAL DUTCH SHELL INVITED TO EXPLORE IN SYRIA

1. VP FOR EXPLORATION OF ROYAL DUTCH SHELL M.W. DOWNEY
TOLD ECONOFF EVENING 4 APRIL SHELL GROUP HAD BEEN
INVITED TO EXPLORE IN SYRIA. AFTER ABSENCE MANY YEARS
SHELL MANAGEMENT AGREED TEST WATERS AND TRY SYRIA AGAIN.

2. DOWNEY AND ASSOCIATES LOOKED OVER CONCESSION AREA -
CENTRAL SYRIA - AND AGREED IT LOOKS PROMISING. HOWEVER,
SURVEY WORK AND TAPES DONE BY SOVIETS USED INFERIOR
TECHNOLOGY AND SHELL WILL DO IT ALL OVER AGAIN FROM
BEGINNING.

3. SHELL FINDS OIL ECONOMICS GOOD. PROBLEM IS
POLITICAL. EXPROPRIATION (NATIONALIZATION) DURING
EXPLORATION STAGE IS LOW RISK; SHELL PREPARED SACRIFICE
35 - 100 MILLION DOLLARS ON CHANCE THERE IS OIL - THIS
MONEY WRITTEN OFF ONCE EXPLORATION BEGINS. HOWEVER,
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SHOULD THEY FIND OIL, DEVELOPMENT OF FIELD COULD RUN
TO 500 MILLION (I.E. PIPELINES, WELLS, ETC.) AND THIS
IS HIGH RISK.

4. SHELL GROUP WILL MAKE UP ITS MIND IN 30 DAYS AND
COME BACK TO SYRIANS WITH DECISION. SYRIANS HAVE
OFFERED "EGYPTIAN CONTRACT" WHICH IS NOT OPTIMUM BUT

REASONABLE. ACTIVE EXPLORATION WILL BEGIN SIX MONTHS
AFTER SIGNING CONTRACT WITH AT MOST TWO CREWS OF ONE
HUNDRED MEN EACH. OESTERN GEOPHYSICAL IS PRIME CANDIDATE
FOR SUBCONTRACT.

5. COMMENT: DOWNEY ASKS THAT SHELL ACTIVITIES SYRIA BE
HELD IN STRICTEST CONFIDENCE UNTIL SUCH A TIME AS
DECISION MADE TO SIGN CONTRACT. IN PARTICULAR, SHELL WANTS
NO PUBLICITY SPREAD ON LOCATION OF CONCESSION AREA.
MURPHY

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Message Attributes

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